

# RESEARCH DIGEST

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The Australian Council for Educational Research was commissioned to prepare this series of electronic research digests.

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The Digest is available by email to Tasmanian registered teachers in PDF format and on the TRB website at: [www.trb.tas.gov.au](http://www.trb.tas.gov.au)

## The Research Digests

This Research Digest is one of a series of periodic digests produced by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) for the NSW Institute of Teachers.

The Institute has kindly made the Digest available to the registration authorities in the other states/territories, under the auspices of the Australasian Forum of Teacher Registration and Accreditation Authorities (AFTRAA).

Each Digest focuses on a single topical issue, and provides a review of major messages from research on the issue. A key feature of the Digest is an emphasis on what the research means for teachers and teaching. Over the course of several editions, a wide range of issues will be covered, so that teachers from different areas of schooling will find topics of particular relevance to their needs.

# Research Digest

*An approach to behaviour management that works most of the time, for most teachers, will improve the learning climate of any school.*

This edition of the *Research Digest* summarises some key research studies that suggest answers to questions such as: How important is behaviour management in effective teaching and learning? Does good behaviour management lead to improved learning outcomes for students? Throughout the digest there are descriptions of approaches that have practical application in classroom practice.

This research digest is based on searches of a number of databases and bibliographic resources, including the Australian Education Index, ERIC, Education Research Complete, British Education Index and Scopus.

The first section presents some insights from research about the importance of behaviour management in effective teaching and learning. This is followed by a discussion of some styles of effective behaviour management. A further section is focused on some studies of contextual factors in students' behaviour, and is followed by an account of recent research about the impact of the set of practices known as restorative justice practices. The final section draws on the relationship between behaviour management and teacher retention. Practical, research-based classroom strategies are highlighted. Some useful websites are listed, and a full reference list is provided.



# Managing classroom behaviour

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Approaches to behaviour management in schools have, to a large extent, reflected general societal changes. An overview of the history of behaviour management in classrooms traces a range of approaches, often negative, from corporal punishment and dunce caps, to the work of the behavioural theorists of the twentieth

latter being more effective in improved social and academic outcomes for students.

This edition of the Research Digest draws on recent research evidence to answer questions such as:

- ▶ How important is behaviour management in effective teaching and learning?

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*A clear distinction is drawn between 'authoritarian' and 'authoritative' classroom management styles, with the latter being more effective in improving social and academic outcomes for students.*

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century. The work of these theorists still influences much contemporary thinking.

A major general trend apparent today in the field of behaviour management studies is an emphasis on the avoidance of coercive styles of behaviour management. The adoption of non-coercive management styles does not mean that the teacher is no longer 'in charge'. Throughout the literature, there is a clear distinction drawn between 'authoritarian' and 'authoritative' classroom management styles, with the

- ▶ How do we define good behaviour management?
- ▶ Does good behaviour management lead to improved learning outcomes for students?
- ▶ Does classroom behaviour management need to be part of a whole school behaviour management plan?
- ▶ What is the role of the school leadership?
- ▶ What works and what doesn't work?
- ▶ Is behaviour management an issue that affects the retention of teachers in the profession? ■



# Behaviour management and effective teaching and learning

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For many teachers and school leaders in the past, a quiet and disciplined classroom was the hallmark of effective teaching. By contrast, it is now recognised that behaviour management skills in themselves are a necessary but not sufficient condition for creating an effective learning environment. These skills are one element in a skilled teacher's repertoire of practice.

There is no doubt that well-ordered classrooms and schools facilitate effective teaching and that good

they regularly experience. Hattie's research about the impact of key influences on the variance in student achievement indicates that it is excellence in teachers that makes the greatest difference. He investigated the differences between expert, accomplished and experienced teachers (Hattie, 2003).

Some of Hattie's findings are particularly interesting in the context of classroom and behaviour management. He found that expert teachers have deeper representations about teaching and learning and because of these deeper representations can be much more responsive to students. In discussing how expert teachers [guide] learning through classroom interaction, he described how expert teachers have a multidimensionally complex perception of classroom situations. In comparing expert teachers with experienced and novice teachers, he noted that

*Expert teachers are more effective scanners of classroom behaviour, make greater reference to the language of instruction and learning of students, whereas experienced teachers concentrate more on what the teacher is saying and doing to the class and novices concentrate more on student behaviour (Hattie, 2003).*

Hattie found that expert teachers showed high respect for students.

*The manner used by the teacher to treat the students, respect them as learners and people, and demonstrate care and commitment for them are attributes of expert teachers. By having such respect, they can recognize possible barriers to learning and can seek ways to overcome these barriers .... The picture drawn of experts is one of involvement and caring for the students, a willingness to be receptive to what the students need, not attempting to dominate the situation (Hattie, 2003).*

In a meta-analysis of more than 100 studies Marzano, Marzano and Picketing (2003b) found that the quality of teacher-student relationships is the keystone for all other aspects of classroom management. They described effective teacher-student relationships as having

*nothing to do with the teacher's personality or even whether the students view the teacher as a friend. Rather, the most effective teacher-student relationships are characterized by specific teacher behaviors: exhibiting appropriate levels of dominance; exhibiting appropriate levels of cooperation; and being aware of high-needs students (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). ■*

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***The manner used by the teacher to treat the students, respect them as learners and people, and demonstrate care and commitment for them are attributes of expert teachers.***

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behaviour management skills are necessary for teachers to perform the core task of improving student learning outcomes. Behaviour management is a crucial skill for both beginning and experienced teachers.

Research has consistently demonstrated the importance of teachers and the quality of their teaching in the lives of children. For many young people, school may be the only stable and predictable environment



# Styles of behaviour management

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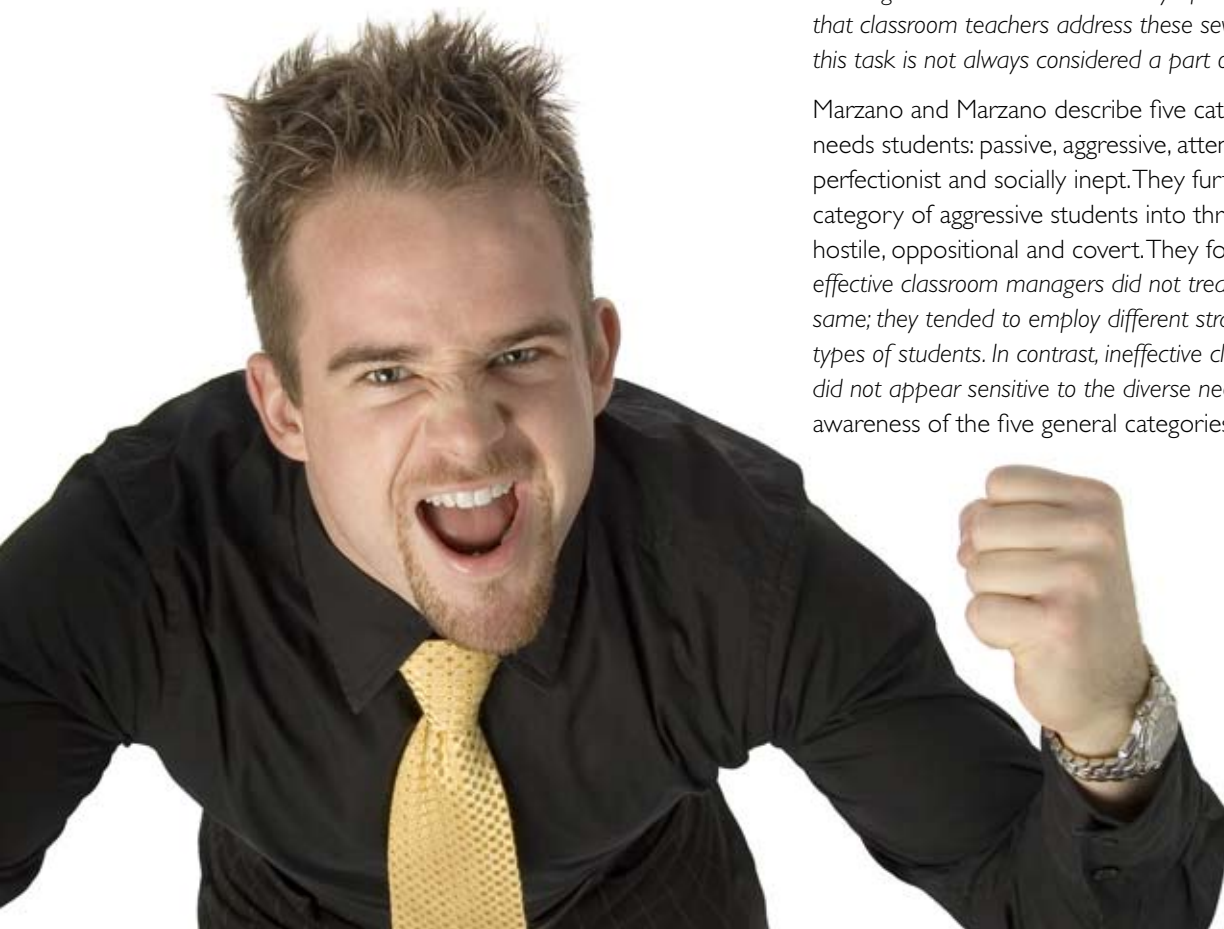
*Appropriate dominance has been identified in a number of studies discussed by Marzano and Marzano as an important characteristic of effective teacher-student relationships (Wubbels et al., 1999; Wubbels & Levy, 1993).*

Dominance is defined as the teacher's ability to provide clear purpose and strong guidance regarding both academics and student behavior. This contrasts with the more negative connotation of the term dominance as forceful control or command over others (Marzano & Marzano, 2003).

Marzano and Marzano note that other studies indicate that when asked about their preferences for teacher behavior, students typically express a desire for this type of teacher-student interaction. For example, in a study that involved interviews with more than 700 students in grades 4-7, students articulated a clear preference for strong teacher guidance and control rather than more permissive types of teacher behavior (Chiu & Tulley). Teachers can exhibit appropriate dominance by establishing clear behavior expectations and learning goals and by exhibiting assertive behavior (Marzano & Marzano, 2003).

Most teachers have 'high needs' students in their classrooms and all teachers know how difficult it can be to balance the needs of these students against the collective needs of the class. Marzano and Marzano note that school may be the only place where the needs of many students who face extreme challenges are addressed. The reality of schools often demands that classroom teachers address these severe issues, even though this task is not always considered a part of their regular job.

Marzano and Marzano describe five categories of high-needs students: passive, aggressive, attention problems, perfectionist and socially inept. They further divide the category of aggressive students into three sub-categories: hostile, oppositional and covert. They found that the most effective classroom managers did not treat all students the same; they tended to employ different strategies with different types of students. In contrast, ineffective classroom managers did not appear sensitive to the diverse needs of students. ... An awareness of the five general categories of high-needs students



and appropriate actions for each can help teachers build strong relationships with diverse students.

Effective teaching and learning requires more than an orderly classroom. Traynor, in a review of the literature, identified five strategies used by teachers in classroom management:

1. coercive
2. laissez-faire
3. task oriented
4. authoritative
5. intrinsic (Traynor, 2002).

Traynor investigated the pedagogical soundness of the five classroom order strategies drawn from the literature, using two criteria:

1. Teaching and learning must result in the development or practice of a desired learning skill.
2. Teaching and learning must contribute to the maintenance or development of a student's emotional well-being.

This small study, conducted in two middle school classrooms, found that the authoritative and intrinsic strategies were pedagogically sound and to be recommended (Traynor, 2002).

Two of these five approaches appear to be more effective than the other three: authoritative and intrinsic. *Using the authoritative strategy, the teacher manages student behavior by enforcing a specific and reasonable set of classroom rules (Collette & Chiapetta, 1989 as cited by Traynor, 2002).*

Traynor notes that *the goal of the intrinsic strategy for classroom order is to increase student control over himself/herself. ... firm, fair and sensitive policies are the key components in establishing and maintaining school discipline (Gaddy & Kelly, 1984 as cited in Traynor, 2002).*

In a seminal paper Lewis, Romi, Qui and Katz (2005) addressed questions of teachers' classroom discipline and student misbehaviour through students' perceptions in three different countries: Australia, China and Israel. Over 700 teachers and more than 5000 secondary students were involved in this study. The study compared students' perceptions of the extent to which different discipline strategies were used, and investigated the relationship between student misbehaviour and classroom discipline in each national setting. Various strategies were examined:

- ▶ Punishment
- ▶ Recognition/rewarding

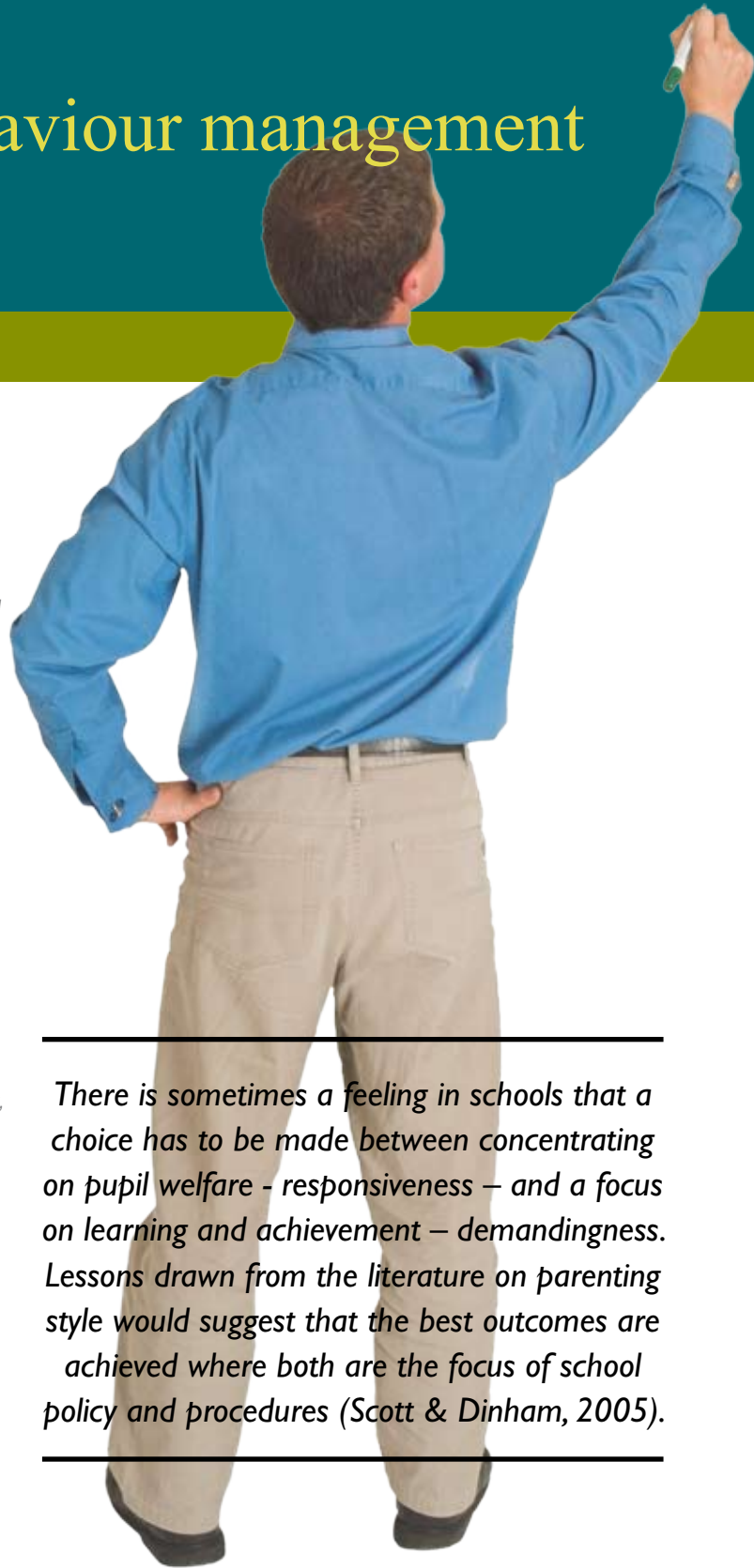


**When middle school students were asked to define caring teachers, they made clear distinctions between the characteristics of teachers who care and those who do not.**

- ▶ Involvement in decision-making (the extent to which teachers tried to include students in decisions relating to discipline)
- ▶ Discussion (provides for the voice of the individual student)
- ▶ Hinting
- ▶ Aggression.

Punishment was ranked as the most commonly used strategy in Australia, the fourth most commonly used strategy in Israel and the fifth most commonly used strategy in China. ■

# Styles of behaviour management



*The broad pattern of results indicates that teachers sampled from China appeared more inclusive and supportive of students' voices when it comes to classroom discipline and are less authoritarian (punitive and aggressive) than those in Israel or Australia... the Australian classrooms are perceived as having least discussion and recognition and most punishment. (Lewis et al., 2005)*

Lewis points out that cultural factors may have some influence on these perceptions.

This study refers to two previous publications – Hyman and Snook's *Dangerous Schools and What You Can Do About Them* (2000), and Lewis's *Classroom Discipline and Student Responsibility: The Students' View* (2001). Both publications indicate the potential negative impact of some classroom management/discipline strategies. Hyman and Snook conjecture that:

*Unnecessarily harsh and punitive disciplinary practices against students create a climate that contributes to school violence. This issue is little recognized and scarcely researched (Hyman & Snook, 2000 as cited in Lewis, 2001)*

Lewis's 2001 publication is a report of the perceptions of over 3,500 Australian school students. This study

*demonstrates empirically that in the view of these students, their teachers are characterized by two distinct discipline styles. The first of these was called "coercive" discipline and comprised Punishment and Aggression (yelling in anger, sarcasm, group punishments, etc.). The second style, comprising Discussion, Hints, Recognition, Involvement and Punishment, was called "Relationship based discipline" (Lewis, 2001 as cited in Lewis et al., 2005).*

The 2001 Lewis report concluded that:

*Students who receive more Relationship based discipline are less disrupted when teachers deal with their misbehavior and generally act more responsibly in that teacher's class. In contrast, the impact of Coercive discipline appears to be more student distraction from work and less responsibility (Lewis, 2001 as cited in Lewis et al., 2005).*

Researchers have discussed effective parenting as a model for teacher influence. Wentzel (2003) takes an "ecological perspective" to understand how a caring classroom environment is created and the importance of contextual factors in students' behaviour. This work drew on

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***There is sometimes a feeling in schools that a choice has to be made between concentrating on pupil welfare - responsiveness – and a focus on learning and achievement – demandingness. Lessons drawn from the literature on parenting style would suggest that the best outcomes are achieved where both are the focus of school policy and procedures (Scott & Dinham, 2005).***

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extensive observations of parents and children (Baumrind, 1971, 1991). Baumrind concluded that four dimensions of parent-child interactions could reliably predict children's social, emotional, and cognitive competence. Control reflects consistent enforcement of rules, provision of structure to children's activities, and persistence in gaining child compliance. Maturity demands reflect expectations to perform up to one's potential, and demands for self-reliance and self-control. Clarity of communication reflects the extent to which parents solicit children's opinions and feelings, and use



reasoning to obtain compliance. Nurturance reflects parental expressions of warmth and approval as well as conscientious protection of children's physical and emotional well-being (Wentzel, 2003).

Wentzel identified a number of theoretical models developed to explain how teachers promote positive student behaviour, which are quite similar to family socialisation models:

*For example, Noddings (1992) suggested that four aspects of teacher behaviour are critical for understanding the establishment of an ethic of classroom caring: (a) modeling caring relationships with others, (b) establishing dialogues characterized by a search for common understanding, (c) providing confirmation to students that their behavior is perceived and interpreted in a positive light, and (d) providing practice and opportunities for students to care for others. Noddings' notions of dialogue and confirmation correspond closely with Baumrind's parenting dimensions of democratic communication styles and maturity demands (Noddings, 1992, as cited in Wentzel, 2003).*

Wentzel noted that when middle school students were asked to define caring teachers, they made clear distinctions between the characteristics of teachers who care and those who do not (Wentzel, 1997; Wentzel, 2003):

*Specifically, students tend to describe caring teachers as those who demonstrate democratic and egalitarian communication styles designed to elicit student participation and input, who develop expectations for student behavior and performance in light of individual differences and abilities, who model a "caring" attitude and interest in their instruction and interpersonal dealings with students, and who provide constructive rather than harsh and critical feedback. ...*

*Subsequent work has demonstrated that students who perceive their teachers to display high levels of these caring characteristics*

*also tend to pursue appropriate social and academic classroom goals more frequently than students who do not (Wentzel, 2003).*

Scott and Dinham (2005) have explored models of good teaching through what research has shown about good parenting. They note that different styles of parenting have been the subject of extensive research, beginning with Baumrind's 1991 description of two dimensions of parenting styles: responsiveness and demandingness.

*Responsiveness, also described as warmth of supportiveness, is defined by Diana Baumrind as 'the extent to which parents individually foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands' (Baumrind, 1991). Parental demandingness (also referred to as behavioural control) refers to the claims parents make on their children to become integrated into the family as a whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys (Scott & Dinham, 2005).*

Scott and Dinham note that

*what is of interest and importance to teachers is the place of self-esteem in this model of outcomes. Self-esteem is commonly regarded as the cause of other desirable outcomes. However, the comparison between permissive and authoritarian parents suggests that self-esteem is not the cause of anything, rather it is the consequence of having warm and responsive parents ... and presumably teachers (Scott & Dinham, 2005).*

*There is sometimes a feeling in schools that a choice has to be made between concentrating on pupil welfare - responsiveness – and a focus on learning and achievement – demandingness. Lessons drawn from the literature on parenting style would suggest that the best outcomes are achieved where both are the focus of school policy and procedures (Scott & Dinham, 2005) ■*



# What works and what doesn't work

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There are many theoretical models and practical strategies in the area of classroom behaviour management. What works and what doesn't work depends on a range of factors including school context and policies, professional collegiality, and the skills and strategies of individual teachers. In *Learning to Discipline*, Metzger, for example, discusses a number of techniques and strategies developed over many years' teaching. Metzger is a practising secondary teacher, a co-director of a mentoring program at her school and a co-teacher of a methods course at Harvard University. She describes her struggles as a beginning teacher to control her classes and how, even today, she can overreact *when tired or frazzled, when I don't know the students, or when I'm just tired of adolescents* (Metzger, 2002).

Metzger recalls the 'anchoring principles' she used in her early years of teaching, both 'simple' and 'more complex'. She lists the following simple and complex principles of survival:

Simple	Complex
1. Don't escalate. De-escalate	1. Ask questions
2. Let students save face	2. Give adult feedback
3. Insist on the right to sanity	3. Respect the rights of the whole class.
4. Get help	4. Ask the students to do more
5. Get out of the limelight – or the line of fire	5. Remember which rules are important
	6. Bypass or solve the perennial problems

Source: (Metzger, 2002)

Metzger elaborates on each of these principles. She reflects, for instance, on one of these principles, the principle of 'de-escalation':

*Don't escalate, de-escalate. Teachers, like parents, need to use a light touch. Let go of some infractions. Whisper instead of yell. Use humour. Change locations. Divide and conquer. Talk to students privately. Make a tiny hand movement. Call kids by name. Smile a lot. Listen. Listen. Listen* (Metzger, 2002).

Other researchers (Barbetta, Norona, & Bicard, 2005) offer a practical application of school-based research in the area of behaviour management and describe twelve common classroom mistakes and what to do instead:

Common classroom mistakes	What to do instead
<b>Mistake No. 1</b> Defining misbehavior by how it looks	1. Define misbehavior by its function
<b>Mistake No. 2</b> Asking: Why did you do that?	2. Assess the behavior directly to determine its function
<b>Mistake No. 3</b> When an approach isn't working, try harder	3. Try another way
<b>Mistake No. 4</b> Violating the principles of good classroom rules	4. Follow the guidelines for classroom rules
<b>Mistake No. 5</b> Treating all misbehaviors as "Won't do's"	5. Treat some behaviors as Can't-do's
<b>Mistake No. 6</b> Lack of planning for transition time	6. Appropriately plan for transition time
<b>Mistake No. 7</b> Ignoring all or nothing at all	7. Ignore wisely
<b>Mistake No. 8</b> Overuse and misuse of time out	8. Follow the principles of effective time-out
<b>Mistake No. 9</b> Inconsistent expectations and consequences	9. Have clear expectations that are enforced and reinforced constantly
<b>Mistake No. 10</b> Viewing ourselves as the only classroom manager	10. Include students, parents and others in management efforts
<b>Mistake No. 11</b> Missing the link between instruction and behavior	11. Use academic instruction as a behavior management tool
<b>Mistake No. 12</b> Taking student behavior too personally	12. Take student misbehavior professionally, not personally

Source: (Barbetta et al., 2005)

Mistake No. 11, missing the link between instruction and behavior, focuses on the importance of appropriate instruction. *At times there is a direct link between our lessons and student misbehavior. Perhaps our lesson is too easy or difficult, ineffective, or nonstimulating, which can lead to student misbehavior* (Center, Deitz & Kaufman, 1982 as cited in Barbetta et al., 2005).

To counter this, Barbetta et al recommend using academic instruction as a behaviour management tool:

*The first line of defense in managing student behavior is effective instruction. Good teachers have always known this and research supports this notion* (Evertson & Harris, 1992). In 1991 Jones found that when teachers demystify learning, achievement and behavior improve dramatically (Jones, 1991). Examples of how to demystify learning include students establishing their learning goals, students monitoring their own learning, involving students in developing classroom rules and procedures, and relating lessons to students' own lives and interests (Barbetta et al., 2005). ■



# Restorative justice practices

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## *Restorative practices offer an alternative student behaviour management approach.*

In schools, restorative justice practices hold students responsible to the person they have harmed rather than to the 'authorities'. While students are accountable for their behaviour, the focus is on repairing the damage they caused to other members of the school community and on restoring relationships. Restorative practices can be a whole school behaviour management approach or an approach practised by individual teachers in their classrooms.

The philosophy of restorative processes was outlined in *Class: A Journal for School Communities* as follows:

*If we were to examine our school disciplinary systems, most would be retributive or adversarial. These systems ask three basic questions:*

- ▶ *What rules were broken?*
- ▶ *Who broke them?*
- ▶ *How shall we punish the breaker of the rules?*

*Restorative processes ask:*

- ▶ *Who's been hurt?*
- ▶ *What are their needs?*
- ▶ *How can we repair the harm?*

*The focus shifts to the harm, who is responsible and how we can work together to repair the damage to relationships (Circle Speak, 2002).*

In *Restorative Justice: The Calm After the Storm*, Lyn Harrison discusses restorative practices:

*Restorative justice is a philosophy and a set of practices that embrace the right blend between a high degree of discipline, which encompasses clear expectations, limits and consequences, and a high degree of support and nurturance. Steinberg (2001) suggests that this blend tends to correlate with the best psychological and behavioural outcomes for children ... Restorative justice programs in schools aim to develop:*

- ▶ *communities that value the building of quality relationships, coupled with clear expectations and limits;*
- ▶ *restorative skills, in the way we interact with young people, and using teachable moments to enhance learning;*
- ▶ *restorative processes that resolve conflict and repair damaged relationships; and,*
- ▶ *communities that are forward-looking, optimistic and inclusive (Harrison, 2006b).*

During the last five years, the Sydney based not-for-profit welfare agency, Marist Youth Care, has developed restorative justice programs

in a number of Australian schools. The agency recommends a whole school approach for maximum impact, based on the following six principles:

1. Focus on the relationship and how people are affected.
2. Restore damaged relationships.
3. Talk about the behaviour without blaming or becoming personal.
4. See mistakes and misbehaviour as an opportunity for learning.
5. Accept that sometimes we cannot get to the ultimate truth.
6. Be future-focused and talk about how to make things right (Harrison, 2006b).

Each principle and its application in school settings is outlined in terms of daily interactions and a whole school community (students, teachers and parents) commitment to collaborative problem solving. Principles 1 and 3, for instance, are elaborated as follows:

### **Principle 1**

*In a traditional school, the focus is on rules and rule-breaking, with punishment as the primary intervention. In a restorative school, the focus is on relationships and how people are affected. A common feature in most students with*

# Restorative justice . practices

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*behavioural difficulties is that they have an underdeveloped sense of 'other'. There is little appreciation that another human being is at the receiving end of their misbehaviour. A key focus of this work is to develop in students a greater empathy for others or what is referred to as 'relational thinking'.*

## **Principle 3**

*Talk about the behaviour without blaming or being personal. The common responses from students when you scold or lecture them are either to shut down or*

*react aggressively and argue back. In either of these two classic responses, the student is distracted from any sense of 'other'. In a restorative conversation, the teacher is absolutely clear about the inappropriateness of the behaviour and the effect that this behaviour has on others – but this conversation is respectful and engaging (Harrison, 2006b).*

Restorative justice practices have historically been used in many Indigenous communities across the

world. In Australia they were introduced in a formal sense in the 1990s in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales with the aim of keeping young offenders away from the courts and the custodial system. Restorative justice holds offenders accountable for their actions but allows them to redress wrongs, to restore relationships and to be re-integrated into the community. The emphasis is on repairing damage rather than punishing, shaming or isolating the offender.

## **How does it work in schools?**

Procedures for the application of restorative justice practices are usually standardised. A number of schools have adopted whole school restorative practices approaches. For example, one secondary college employs affective questions adapted from the Marist Youth Care's Restorative Justice Program. These are:

- ▶ What happened?
- ▶ How did it happen?
- ▶ How did you act in this situation?





- Who do you think was affected?
- How were you affected?
- What needs to happen to make things right?
- If the same situation happens again, how could you behave?

*If, for instance, something happens in the classroom, we get the students to see that their behaviour doesn't just affect them, but it also has an impact on the teacher and on the learning of the whole class. That's one of the benefits of this approach – students begin to see how others are affected and accept responsibility for that (Rosanne Clough, Principal Donremy College).*

Introducing these questions can help to develop a common language and approaches to be used in dealing with inappropriate behaviour in everyday school situations, rather than simply challenging that behaviour (Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme, 2005).

One cluster of five schools established an Emotional Literacy project and used restorative practices (Fould, 2006). Teachers involved in this project commented on the impact of the change:

*After several weeks of implementing the values*

*content, things have changed. At the surface level, there has been an increased amount of work being produced by students, and relational slips for being sent out of the classroom have decreased significantly (Grade 5/6 teacher).*

### **Do restorative justice practices work in schools?**

It is often difficult to attribute changes in school communities to a particular initiative because of the necessarily longitudinal nature of much educational research. However, there is considerable evidence that restorative justice practices can have an effect in changing school climates and in direct change, such as a reduction in the number of suspensions and exclusions. Paul Harney (2005), for instance, presents both quantitative and qualitative evidence from a study of the effects of restorative justice practices in three Catholic secondary colleges in Sydney. Over eighteen months, absenteeism fell

by twenty-one percent, detentions fell by thirty-four percent and out of school suspensions fell by forty-two per cent. Feedback has indicated growing support in the school community for restorative practices.

Individual teachers using restorative practices in their classrooms may also note changes in behaviour and classroom climate. The Inquiry into Restorative Justice Principles in Youth Settings (Standing Committee on Education Training and Young People, ACT 2006) cites the example of a recently graduated teacher of a Year 2/3 class who had undertaken a short restorative practices training: *In the classroom now, it is so much easier. I am feeling more empowered to deal with things*” (Standing Committee on Education Training and Young People, ACT 2006).

In *Managing Students with Challenging Behaviours*, Lyn Harrison discusses various de-escalating interventions:

*Many teachers assume that a student with challenging behaviours is best seated close to them to maximise supervision. This can be counterproductive since the authority figure close by can escalate oppositional behaviour (Hewitt, 1999). Some teachers ask the student to nominate a positive peer to sit with, and that peer student then indicates to the student when they observe off-task or escalating behaviour. When approaching a particularly agitated student, it's best not to do so from the front, which is confrontational, but from the side (Harrison, 2006a).*

Restorative practices can operate effectively with other approaches to classroom management. While restorative practices are based on an agreed set of principles and processes, other behaviour management models and applications are in keeping with the spirit and philosophy of these practices. ■



# Behaviour management: an issue that affects all teachers

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Behaviour management is an issue that affects all teachers. Research indicates that factors related to behaviour management play a role in the decision of many early career, and other teachers to leave the profession. Issues related to behaviour management are particularly important in the first years of teachers' careers. The daily experiences and reality of the classroom may be quite different from the expectations of beginning teachers.

A recent MCEETYA (Ministerial Council for Education, Employment Training and Youth Affairs) report focussed on teachers in their first ten years of employment in government, Catholic and independent schools in four Australian states. The authors of the report, Skilbeck and Connell

(2004), discuss the variety of attractions to teaching careers:

*Consistently, the most fulfilling aspects of teaching are the learning achievements of students, down to single individuals, for whom teachers have responsibility – the light of understanding coming into students' eyes; new, more socially responsible patterns of behaviour demonstrated and so on (Skilbeck & Connell, 2004).*

However, the same report also notes some of the major difficulties and frustrations of a teaching career:

*Common to most teachers in their early years are workload and classroom management challenges, often presented as severe. While workload issues includes the sheer amount of time and effort required for lesson planning, preparation, evaluation and documentation,*

*it also includes coming to terms with and learning to handle the variety of emotional and social support roles for students, which have become an increasing expectation of teachers over recent years, and teachers' broader participation in school life... New teachers frequently expressed uncertainty over classroom management skills, particularly in relation to meeting the widely varied individual learning needs of students in the inclusive classroom (Skilbeck & Connell, 2004).*

Research has shown clearly that professional collegiality and deprivatisation of practice are major factors in effective teaching and learning. Effective and supportive leadership is a major part of this picture. A whole school approach to behaviour management will be more effective than

teachers working in isolation and without collegial support.

*While challenging behaviours amongst students - notably uncooperative and abusive behaviour from students as young as in the first years of primary school – were talked about by most teachers, it appeared to be much less of a problem for teachers in those schools where a consistent, school-wide behaviour programme operated, and teachers felt they had support from both colleagues and school management (Skilbeck & Connell, 2004).*

While it is desirable for classroom behaviour management to be part of a whole school behaviour management plan, there is much that teachers can do individually within their own classrooms to create an appropriate atmosphere to carry out their core tasks. ■





# comment

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There is no one-size-fits-all solution to remove problems related to behaviour management from classrooms. Different approaches work in different situations. No behaviour management plan will work with all children all the time. However, an approach that works most of the time, for most teachers, will improve the learning climate of any school. Whatever the plan or approach, the emphasis throughout the research literature is on building positive relationships with students and on adopting authoritative as opposed to authoritarian teaching styles.

Haim Ginott (1922-1973) was a clinical psychologist, child therapist and parent educator who worked with children, parents and teachers. His work focussed on a combination of compassion and boundary setting. In 1972, Ginott described the classroom teachers' position in terms of their importance and influence in the lives of children:

*I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humour, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized (Ginott, 1972).*

## USEFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.education-world.com>

This website covers a range of educational issues, including approaches to behaviour management. The site is funded by corporate advertisers and is free for all visitors.

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/>

The UK Government's Teachernet provides some useful resources and links to other interesting sites.

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### Further reading:

A useful current reference providing extensive coverage of research in the area of behaviour management is:

Evertson, C. M., & Weinstein, C. S. (Eds.). (2006). *Handbook of Classroom Management: Research, Practice and Contemporary Issues*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Erlbaum.